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ABSTRACT

A study examined the technical versus managerial roles of public relations practitioners. The study investigated what it takes to be a manager, what skills and perspectives are needed by entry-level practitioners as they climb the ladder, and what actions educators should take to ensure that students learn the critical skills. Three hundred sixty-three questionnaires, answered by members of the Public Relations Society of America, were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Results indicated that the public relations curriculum of the future will, and must, include a strong management perspective. Results showed that: (1) entry-level practitioners must demonstrate high quality performance in oral and written communication skills; and (2) educators need to incorporate into the curriculum skills identified as critical to success such as problem solving, planning and organizing, goal setting/prioritization, and people-management skills such as delegation, supervision, and coaching. Results suggested that developing these skills is key to the future of public relations education. (Seven tables of data are included; 21 references are attached.) (PRA)

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TEACHING PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGEMENT: BRINGING "THE IDEAL" AND "THE REAL" CLOSER TOGETHER

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ABSTRACT

This 1990 national study is an extension of the growing body of research exploring the "technical" versus "managerial" roles of public relations practitioners. What does it take to be a "manager?" What skills and perspectives are needed by entry-level practitioners as they climb the ladder? What actions should educators take to ensure that students learn the critical skills? The authors contend that developing answers to these questions is key to the future of public relations education.

###

INTRODUCTION

Not long ago, a high-level public relations counselor from a prestigious New York agency visited the campus of a large Eastern university to speak to students studying public relations.

After the presentation, the executive confided to a public relations educator that, while the students were certainly impressive, his agency had no plans to recruit employees from that, or any other, communications program. Rather, he said, he would be visiting liberal arts colleges in his search: "There they teach students to think and to solve problems."

Dismaying and inaccurate as that comment may be to public relations educators and their students, the agency executive is not alone in his opinion. The perception that public relations education programs are too focused on communications techniques and skills, and not enough focused on critical thinking and analytical skills, is shared by many professional practitioners.

What this executive did not know, or perhaps chose to ignore, is that during the last ten years there has been a movement among journalism and mass communication educators to look more broadly at their mandate and to prepare their students for more than just technical, entry-level positions in mass communications-based industries. Today, many public relations educators seek ways to equip their students with life-long management and leadership abilities. In addition to the basic skills of writing and editing, visual communications, and audio and video production, many educators have taken positive steps to

add opportunities to learn and practice skills in analysis; problem-solving and decision-making; goal-setting and prioritization; planning and organizing; budgeting and time management.

Indeed, when AEJMC's Public Relations Division held a pre-convention workshop on "Teaching Public Relations Management" at its 1987 convention in San Antonio, more than 30 educators crowded into the room. Fifteen of them shared their current syllabi and others hoped to develop their own. According to Elizabeth Lance Toth (then at Southern Methodist University and now on the Syracuse University faculty), who analyzed the course offerings at that time, public relations management courses fell within three types: those that followed a traditional business school approach to teaching management; those that were basically public relations campaigns courses with managerial overtones; and those "hybrids," which combined elements of the other two types.

How were these courses developed? How did public relations educators decide their content? What should the content of public relations management courses be? Perhaps we should begin with even more basic questions: What does it mean to be a "manager?" More specifically, what does it take to be a manager? What skills and perspectives are necessary to be effective as a manager of public relations? As public relations educators, the authors believe that developing answers to these questions is critical to the future of public relations education. Thus, we undertook this current study.

BACKGROUND

Growing interest in teaching public relations management is a reflection both of what is occurring in the public relations profession today and of what empirical research is demonstrating about practitioners.

There is no question that the pressure is on public relations professionals to act more "managerially." As Nager and Allen write in their book applying principles of management by objectives to public relations:

> **The trend to acquire greater management skills stems from two basic sources: top management and the public relations profession itself. Chief executive officers (CEOs) around the nation are saying, in essence, 'We need and want your advice on policy issues. And, if you are going to be a part of the first team, you have to think like we do.' (1984:2)**

A prominent CEO, Roger Smith of General Motors, is even more specific:

> **. . .we need good minds that can leap easily from legal to economic to environmental issues, and back again -- minds that can integrate the expertise from other disciplines within the corporation and then meld it together, against a backdrop of corporate direction plus current and anticipated conditions, and come up with reliable advice to management and effective communications plans. (Cantor, 1989:21)**

Nearly ten years ago, the International Public Relations Association (IRPA) predicted that instantaneous communications through technology and a shrinking world through globalization

would pose new challenges to the public relations practitioner as manager:

> **To public relations managers this implies that their future depends on staying ahead of senior management's needs; they must keep looking at the next area of concern, translating today's issues of concern into future opportunities by injecting this knowledge into corporate policy consistent with public opinion and translating it into public relations programs of action. . . The ability to comprehend the overall business strategy, the corporate policy, the market place, the external environment, is vital. (1982:8)**

The time for public relations practitioners to develop this new expertise is now, according to Robert L. Dilenschneider, president and CEO of Hill and Knowlton:

> **The 1990s will be a make-or-break time for public relations and public affairs. We shall either be thought of, and called upon, as a serious business function, or be brought in as an afterthought to "dress things up" after the lawyers, bankers, accountants and line executives have made all the decisions. . .**
>
> **Our performance in the 1990's, and into the 21st century, will depend on getting beyond the how-to tactics and logistical support considerations that have been a frequent topic in industry dialogue recently. It will depend on understanding and tackling the big social, economic, and political issues in our communities, in the nation and around the globe. (1990: p.7)**

Since the late 1970's, the study of public relations roles has provided invaluable documentation of the work behavior of public relations practitioners and of the relationship of these practitioners to their organizations. In the 1970's, Broom and his colleagues began an important area of research when

they developed a typology of public relations roles (Broom and Smith, 1978, 1979; Acharya, 1981; and Broom, 1982). At one end of a continuum of roles played by practitioners is the "technician," who is confined to low-level communications tasks assigned to him/her by others; at the other end is the "manager," who is elevated to the decision-making level and is concerned with problem definition and resolution. During the 1980's, additional research on roles appeared, with some research programs attempting to add to the understanding of practitioner roles (Johnson and Achayra, 1982; Cottone et al, 1985; Broom and Dozier, 1986) while others moved on to examining the relationship between roles and other variables such as gender (Broom, 1982; Dozier, 1988); salary (Dozier, Chapo and Sullivan, 1983; Scrimger, 1985); and participation in top decision-making (Dozier, 1984, 1985, 1986; Judd, 1987; and Ferguson, 1987).

By the mid-1980s, Broom and Dozier were suggesting that the next step in this stream of public relations role research should be an examination of the actual managerial behaviors of public relations managers or of the managerial expectations of their organizations. It therefore seems appropriate to study the managerial perspectives and skills that practitioners themselves identify as essential to assuming a managerial role, the extent to which those perspectives and skills are present, or lacking, in those practitioners, and what managerial skills and perspectives thus might deserve special attention from public relations educators and their students.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

This 1990 study is based in large part upon a 1987/88 study of public relations practitioners in a four-state area of the Southwest: Arkansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Texas. The purpose of that original survey was to gather and examine practitioner opinions and perceptions of how important various managerial skills and orientations are for the success of organizations and of the public relations specialists who work for those organizations. In that study, 2400 members of the Public Relations Society of America received a mail questionnaire with a second complete mailing three weeks later. In response, 561 completed questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 23%.

That study revealed, in part, that although public relations managers tend to have good written and oral communications skills, they are lacking other such important leadership skills as planning and organization, problem solving and decision making, goal setting and prioritizing, time management, analysis, and financial planning and budgeting.

The current study was undertaken because of the promising information garnered in the earlier research and the interest it generated among practitioners and educators. This time, a mail questionnaire was sent nationwide to 1213 members of the Public Relations Society of America (as listed in the 1990-91 Register) selected at intervals from a random starting point. Twenty-seven questionnaires were returned by the U.S. Postal Service as non-

deliverable for an actual sample of 1186. Those returning questionnaires numbered 363 for a response rate of 30 percent. (It is interesting that the conventional wisdom of obtaining a higher response rate by doing a follow-up mailing did not pertain here; the response rate of 30 percent was achieved with only a reminder postcard, while the complete second mailing in the first study resulted only in a 23 percent response rate.)

Another important difference between the studies is the fact that educators were included in the sample for the second project. Also, the research team added gender as a variable in the second study.

The primary mailing consisted of the survey instrument with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, and a postage-paid business-reply envelope. Approximately two weeks later, a reminder postcard was sent, asking those who had not yet completed the questionnaire to do so, and thanking those who had returned the questionnaire.

The 363 completed questionnaires were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Included in this report is data for are all respondents who returned surveys. However, because some respondents did not answer all questions, the number of responses to each question does not always equal 363.

FINDINGS

Profile of Respondents and Their Organizations:

By far the practitioners (95.5%) outnumbered the educators (4.5%). The largest number of respondents work in public relations counseling firms (32.2%), followed distantly by manufacturing companies (11.7%), educational institutions (10.8%), hospitals (7.2%), government (6.1%), financial institutions and public utilities (each at 5.8%), travel/tourism organizations (2.2%), and lastly, cultural organizations (1.1%). Another 7.5% replied that they worked for "other" organizations, usually associations.

Most (66.9%) of the respondents work in privately-owned companies or firms; the rest (33.1%) work in public organizations.

When asked to identify themselves by title, the largest percentage of respondents (23.1%) said "public relations director." This group was followed by "owner/president" (18.0%); "director of communications" (12.4%); "specialist" (8.7%); "marketing director" (7.6%); "account supervisor" (5.9%) and "vice president" (5.4%). Other titles (e.g., consultant, employee communications, community relations, media relations, publications manager) each received a few mentions.

The modal age group was 35-44 (33.7%), while 23.5% of the respondents were between 25 and 34 and 22.1% were between 45 and

54. Young practitioners (24 and younger) were the smallest group (4.1%), probably in line with the membership profile of the Public Relations Society of America from which the sample was drawn.

Most had a bachelor's degree (59.2%), while 28.4% had a master's degree. MBAs were held by 2.8%; juris doctor degrees by 0.8%; and PhDs by 3.3%. Another 4.7% had some college but no degree. Only 0.8% had not gone beyond a high school education.

Journalism (or journalism/mass communications) was the college major of 40.4% of this group. This was followed by 16.1% who majored in the humanities; 13.2% in communications; and 8.2% each for social sciences and public relations. Other majors mentioned by a few respondents were business; education; and math/science.

The average length of experience for practitioners was 13 years, while the average length for educators was 3.5 years. For both groups, the average length of time in the current job was 3 years. Eighteen percent had 5 or fewer years of experience, and 29.1% had 20 years or more of experience.

Finally, the breakdown by gender was 54.6% female and 45.4% male, following, roughly, the current breakdown of members of the Public Relations Society of America.

Most Important Managerial Skill:

While this question was not asked of the 1987 study group, in 1990 the research team wanted to know the single most important skill or ability practitioners felt they needed to be effective in their jobs. Their answers? More than one third said communication skills (37.1%); followed by problem-analysis (25.1%); management skills (20.3%); leadership traits (14.6%); and personality characteristics (2.3%).

Because of small cell sizes, only one of the cross tabulations performed on this data was statistically significant. However, the cross tabulations on this and subsequent questions revealed some interesting descriptive differences and we report these to the reader.

For example, running cross tabulations to see if age, gender, education, job title, years of experience as a practitioner, or years of experience as an educator correlated with responses revealed no significant relationships. However, years of experience in the current job is statistically significant: those with less than ten years' experience in the current job tend to emphasize management skills (23.6% for one year or less; 18.8% for those with 2-5 years; and 31.0% for those with 6-10 years). Those with ten and more years' experience tend to value problem analysis (41.3%). Communications skills are valued almost equally across the categories of experience in the current job.

While not statistically significant, it appears that women (28.3%) emphasize problem-analysis more than their male counterparts (22.0%) as the single most important skill, while men (23.9%) tend to favor management skills when compared to women (17.6%).

What New/Different Perspectives?

A second question posed for the first time in this study asked the respondents to identify what new or different perspectives public relations managers will need to develop in order to be effective in the 1990s and beyond. Based on frequencies, the most often cited responses to this open-ended question were: management skills (24.1% of the respondents); a global perspective (23.8%); and ethics and social issues (14.5%). Many respondents listed two, or event three, different needs.

Respondents differed somewhat in terms of age: those 34 and younger were more likely to emphasize global perspectives (32.1%) and management skills (29.5%); those 55 and older seemed to value ethics and social issues (21.7%). There was virtually no difference between men and women who answered this question: they almost equally chose a global perspective (23.4% of the men and 24.5% of the women) and ethics and social issues (13.1% of the men and 15.2% of the women). They differed slightly when it came to management skills as the new perspective needed: 27.2% of the women chose this option, versus 21.2% of the men.

Education played no significant role, except it is of interest to note that those with a high school education chose a global perspective twice as many times as those with MBAs, JDs, or PhDs (33.3% versus 16.7%). It also appears that those with under 10 years of experience as public relations practitioners mention a global perspective more often than those with ten or more years (55.4% versus 42.9%). The less experienced practitioners also put more emphasis on management skills (56.8% versus 42.9%). However, in terms of emphasizing ethics and social issues as the important new perspective, those with ten or more years of experience were more likely to do so over their younger counterparts (43.3% versus 34.3%). For educators, those with less than four years of experience were much more likely to choose a global perspective (40%) over those with four or more years of experience (20%). This was the case when it came to ethics and social issues: less experienced educators made this choice more often (30%) than their experienced colleagues (10%). When it came to choosing management skills as the needed new perspective, educators with fewer than four years' experience and educators with more than four years' experience did so at exactly the same percentage rate (20%).

Skill Requisites for Public Relations Managers:

Next, the study group was asked to rate the relative importance (5= "extremely important" to 1= "not at all important") of 8 different broad skills in management or leadership. Interestingly, oral communication skills -- often considered a technical, rather than a managerial skill -- ranked the highest, with 98.4% of those responding rating it as "important" or "very important." Next in the ratings was problem-solving skills (97.1%), perhaps a reflection of current difficult times and increased pressures on organizations and their public relations counselors. This was followed by written communications skills (97.0%); planning/organizing (95.6%); and goal-setting (92.2%). At this point, the ratings drop off dramatically, with time management, analytical skills, and finance and budgeting mentioned as important or extremely important by 82.8%, 79.9%, and 62.4% of the respondents, respectively.

An examination of the cross tabulations performed on this section of the data revealed little, except in the area of gender. It appears that for virtually every broad management/leadership skill put forth, women put much heavier emphasis on its importance than did their male counterparts. While in many cases, men gave a skill a "3" or "4" rating, women were more likely to rate it a "5" for "extremely important."

Female/male breakdowns of ratings for each skill were: oral communication (56% versus 44%); planning/organizing (74.5% versus 47.2%); problem-solving; (75.9% versus 52.8%); finance/budgeting (22.1% versus 11.7%); goal-setting (63.8% versus 36.2%); analytical skills (42.1% versus 38.7%); and time management (51.3% versus 30.7%). The authors do not venture to speculate at this point on the meaning of this strong tendency of women to put heavier emphasis than men on the importance of these skills.

Important People-Management Skills:

The research team also wanted to know how the respondents would rank in importance a variety of people-management skills. The rankings (based on aggregate percentages of those responding "important" or "extremely important") were: delegating (91.7%); supervising (86.8%); coaching/counseling (84.1%); negotiating 79.0%); group process skills (73.5%); and performance evaluation (64.1%).

Again, this data was cross tabulated for such variables as age, gender, education, number of years in current job, and number of years as a practitioner or as an educator. The only variable that made even some difference (though not a statistically significant difference) is gender. "Delegating" (ranked most important overall by respondents) is extremely important for 57.1% of the women, versus 49.7% of the men. "Supervising" (second most important overall) is rated "extremely

important" by 41.8% of the women; 32.9% of the men rated it at this level of importance. This trend of female versus male differences continued: with "coaching/counseling" it was 47.2% of the women and 44.7% of the men assigning a rating of "extremely important." For "negotiating," it was 45.1% of the women and 28.4% of the men who said "extremely important." "Group process skills" were more important to women (41.3%) than to men (26.7%). And, finally, for "performance evaluation" was ranked "extremely important" by 23.5% of the women ranked it as "extremely important" compared to 17.3% of the men.

Other Requisites for Public Relations Managers:

Respondents also were asked how important it was for public relations managers to have an understanding of certain functions or issues. Strategic planning led the rankings with 91.2% of the respondents rating this function as "important or extremely important. Ethical issues (88.1%), marketing (87.6%), and social responsibility (83.7%) followed slightly behind. Considerably farther back in importance, according to our respondents, were the areas of technological developments in communication (64.8%); First Amendment/legal issues (53.9%), equal employment opportunity policies and procedures (51.9%), and labor relations (39.0%).

It is at this point that variables other than gender seem to have some impact, even if not a statistically significant one.

For example, age: younger practitioners (five or fewer years of experience) believe that "strategic planning" is an important function to understand -- more so than those with 20-plus years of experience (65.6% versus 51.8%). Younger educators (three years or fewer) tend to place greater importance on "strategic planning" than do their more experienced colleagues (71.4% versus 50%).

Education also plays a role. "Ethical issues" are ranked "extremely important" by 72% of those respondents holding MBAs, JDs, or PhDs , versus by only 65% of those with a high school diploma or some college. Persons emphasizing ethics also tend to be older (63.3% of those over 55, versus 51.5% of those 34 or younger).

And experience has some effect in some cases. In terms of "marketing" as an important issue to know, less experienced practitioners (five or fewer years) put heavier emphasis (54.7% in this category) than did more experienced practitioners (48.2% of those with more than 20 years' in the profession). The same is true for less experienced educators: 42.9% of those with 3 or fewer years of experience emphasized marketing more than experienced educators (35.7%).

"Social responsibility" ranked higher in importance for respondents with MBAs, JDs, or PhDs (64.0%) in comparison with those holding high school diplomas (50.0%), bachelor's degrees (39.3%), or master's degrees (43.7%).

In terms of gender, females placed more emphasis than did men on: strategic planning (62.2% versus 50.6%); ethical issues (56.4% versus 54.0%); marketing (51.0% versus 39.3%); and social responsibility (43.1% versus 41.1%).

What's Missing?

The research team asked the respondents to indicate which skills are most likely to be missing in public relations practitioners, whether at the entry level or managerial level. Perhaps this chart best shows respondent opinions:

SKILL	NOT MISSING	MISSING MAN.	MISSING ENTRY	BOTH
		(percentages)		
Written	35.8	4.4	45.7	14.0
Oral	52.3	6.6	33.3	7.7
Planning/ Organizing	28.1	8.0	48.5	15.5
Problem-Solving	25.9	6.9	49.6	17.6
Finance/ Budgeting	12.4	9.1	44.9	33.6
Goal-Setting	29.5	9.4	41.0	20.1

Not surprisingly, entry-level practitioners, presumably with less experience than managers, were more likely to be thought deficient in each of these skills than managers. But an embarrassingly large number of respondents thought that both managers and entry-level practitioners lacked expertise in key managerial skills: finance and budgeting; goal setting; problem-solving; and even written communications. In similar fashion, the survey asked respondents which perspectives or understandings are most likely to be missing in public relations practitioners at the different levels. This chart explains the responses:

PERSPECTIVE	NOT MISSING	MISSING MGT	MISSING ENTRY	BOTH
		(percentages)		
First Amendment legal issues	29.5	8.8	30.9	30.9
Ethics	42.1	10.7	30.3	16.8
Social Responsibility	53.7	13.8	23.1	9.4
Equal employment opportunity policies	34.7	12.7	34.4	18.2
Labor relations	19.8	8.3	41.0	30.9
Marketing	49.6	6.6	34.2	9.6
Strategic Planning	22.6	4.4	58.7	14.3

Again, less experienced entry-level practitioners were more likely to be lacking. Interestingly enough, an understanding of social responsibility -- the perspective viewed as least lacking among entry-level practitioners -- was identified as most lacking among managers.

Skills Needed Through Educational Programs:

Finally, the team questioned both the practitioners and educators in the sample on the importance of entry-level practitioners gaining a basic knowledge of various skills while still in college. Most frequently identified as skills that should be taught were: problem-solving and decision-making (86.6%); planning/organizing (86.4%); and goal-setting (86.1%). Mentioned somewhat less frequently were: ethics/legal issues (81.4%); time management (78.5%); and social roles/responsibilities (74.4%). At the end of the respondents' list were: management principles (66.2%); research (61.8%); group process skills (59.6%); negotiating skills (58.4%); supervision ((55.8%); financial/budgeting skills (54.7%); and performance evaluation (37.5%).

Of the most frequently mentioned -- problem-solving and decision-making, planning/organizing, and goal-setting, women clearly put more emphasis on the importance of teaching these skills in educational programs. Women (58.3%) were more likely

than men (41.0%) to say problem-solving is "extremely important." Women also stressed planning/organizing more than men: 59.3% versus 37.0%. And, women valued more the importance of goal setting: 56.7% versus 38.3% for men

Age also played a role here: respondents 34 or younger emphasized planning/organizing more heavily (59.2%) than did those 55 and older (41.7%). The same was true for goal-setting: younger persons put greater value on this skill (61.2%) than did older persons (40.0%). The pattern also held for problem-solving: 50.5% of those 34 or younger called this skill "extremely important" compared with 41.7% of those 55 and older.

Where Should Management Skills Be Taught?

Since educators were not included in the earlier study, the research team felt that the current study could be enhanced by including several questions to be answered by educators only. In the first of seven questions in this section, educators were asked to give their opinions as to where certain management skills would be best taught. Here's the response, in chart form:

TYPE OF COURSE

SKILL	PR THEORY/ INTRO.	PR SKILLS COURSE	PR MGT.	PR CASE STUDIES/ CAMPAIGNS	OUTSIDE PR CURR.	NOT AT ALL
			(percentages)			
Mgt. Princ.	6.3		62.5	6.3	25.0	
Ethics	56.3			31.3	12.5	
Social Respons.	78.6		14.3		7.1	
Planning/ Organ.	25.0	12.5	25.0	25.0	12.5	
Goal-setting	31.3		37.5	25.0	6.3	
Finance	13.3	6.7	40.0	20.0	20.0	
Problem-solving	25.0		18.8	50.0	6.3	
Time Mgt.	25.0		37.5	18.8	18.8	
Negotiation Skills	6.7		26.7	26.7	40.0	
Group Process	18.8	12.5	12.5	18.8	37.5	
Leadership		6.3	43.8	18.8	31.3	
Performance Evaluation	6.3	6.3	43.8	25.0	18.8	
Research	46.7	13.3	13.3	13.3	13.3	

Where Are These Skills Actually Taught?

For each of these same skills, the educators were asked to indicate where these skills actually were taught within their academic programs.

TYPE OF COURSE

SKILL	PR THEORY/ INTRO.	PR SKILLS COURSE	PR MGT.	PR CASE STUDIES/ CAMPAIGNS	OUTSIDE PR CURRIC.	NOT AT ALL
			(percentages)			
Mgt. Princ.	6.3		28.6	7.1	35.7	
Ethics	61.5			23.1	15.4	
Social Respon.	78.6		7.1	7.1	7.1	
Planning/ Organ.	28.6	7.1	14.3	35.7		14.3
Goal-setting	30.8	7.7		46.2	7.7	7.7
Finance	8.3	8.3	16.7	41.7	16.7	8.3
Problem-solving	7.1		14.3	71.4	7.1	
Time Mgt.		7.1	14.3	14.3	14.3	50.0
Negotiation Skills				15.4	46.2	38.5
Group Process	14.3			21.4	50.0	14.3
Leadership	7.7		15.4	23.1	23.1	30.8
Performance Eval.	14.3		28.6	14.3	7.1	35.7
Research	41.7	8.3	16.7	25.0		

Comparison of the ideal ("should be") and the real ("are") shows that public relations educators do not always practice what they preach or what they believe to be the "right" thing to do. Not one single skill was identified by the educators in this group as something that should not be taught to public relations students. But, in practice, many of these skills are not being taught at all by many public relations educators, or they are being left to classes outside the public relations curriculum. Time management skills are most likely to be totally neglected (by 50%), along with negotiating (38.5%), performance evaluation (35.7%), leadership (30.8%), planning and group process skills (each at 14.3%), and finance/budgeting (8.3%).

On balance, however, the abovementioned skills, while important, were not ranked as important in this study as the skills of problem-solving and decision-making; planning/organizing; and goal-setting and prioritizing. Where do the educators in this study say that their students get **those** critical skills?

Cross tabulations indicate that for those educators who ranked problem-solving and decision-making as "important" or "very important," the overwhelming majority (70%) said that these skills were taught in their public relations case studies classes. Among those who placed this same high value on planning/organizing, the educator respondents spread the teaching of this skill across several courses: public relations theory (28.6%); public relations skills courses (7.1%); and

public relations management courses (35.7%). But 14.3% said that while planning/organizing are "important" skills, they are not taught at all to their public relations students.

In teaching goal-setting/prioritizing, the educator respondents who valued this skill as "important" or "very important" tended to teach it in public relations case study classes (46.2%) or in the public relations theory class (30.8%). Small percentages (7.7% each) allocated this instruction to the public relations skills courses or to courses outside the public relations curriculum. The final group (7.7%) indicated that goal-setting/prioritizing was not taught at all to their students.

The educators also were asked some basic questions about their teaching of public relations management.

Almost three-quarters (73.3%) of the educators teach one or more courses that are devoted at least 50 percent to managing, leading, and/or administering the public relations function. Of those, only 16.7% required that their public relations majors enroll in one or mor courses in a college, school or department of management or business; 66.7% merely recommended such enrollment. A final group (16.7%) neither required nor recommended business courses.

To those who did recommend management/business courses, most frequently recommended were marketing (73.3%); organizational theory (53.3%); economics (46.7%); management information (33.3%); accounting (26.7%); and strategic planning (26.7%).

When asked whether or not their students had trouble getting into these business courses in other schools, 46.7% replied "almost never;" 33.3% said "sometimes;" and 20% said "almost always."

PERCEPTIONS COMPARED: THE 1988/89 AND 1990 STUDIES

While the 1990 survey was not an exact replication of the one administered in 1988-89, perhaps there is value in comparing some of the findings. First, let us note again that the 1988/89 survey was regional; the current study was sent to a national roster. The first study focused on practitioners only; this study included educators. Lastly, it should be kept in mind that the respondents in the 1988/89 study were asked questions on the skills needed by practitioners to move into management positions; the 1990 study posed the questions in terms of the skills needed by entry-level practitioners. Nonetheless, the comparison may show a reinforcement of, or agreement upon, key skills needed by public relations managers:

BROAD MANAGEMENT/LEADERSHIP REQUISITE SKILLS

(rank order percentages)

1988/89		1990	
Communications Skills		Oral Com.	98.4
Oral	95.5		
Written	93.5		
Planning/Organizing	91.0	Problem-Solving	97.1
Problem-Solving	90.8	Written Com.	97.0
Goal-Setting	83.2	Planning/Org.	95.6
Time Mgt.	79.6	Goal-Setting	92.2
Analytical Skills	71.2	Time Mgt.	82.8
Financial/Budgeting	55.7	Analytical	79.9
		Financial/Bud.	62.4

It is obvious that communications skills came out on top when the two surveys are compared. The increased emphasis on problem-solving in the 1990 survey is of interest. Also of note is the increase in percentages: in 1990, the respondents place even heavier emphasis on each of these skills than did the 1988/89 respondents. Based on the information gathered in these studies, it might be possible to suggest here that there is a growing sensitivity among public relations practitioners and

educators to a more professional view of public relations as a management function, thus accounting for the high percentages of respondents placing heavy emphasis on managerial skills.

Comparing the results of the two studies in terms of respondent perceptions of the importance of various people-management skills results in this chart:

PEOPLE-MANAGEMENT REQUISITE SKILLS

(rank order percentages)

1988/89		1990	
Delegation	79.7	Delegation	91.7
Supervision	74.0	Supervision	86.8
Negotiating	70.1	Coaching	84.1
Group Process	68.7	Negotiating	79.0
Coaching	67.1	Group Process	73.5
Staff Dev.	63.4	----------	
Performance Evaluation	52.5	Performance Evaluation	64.1

Again, while the order of rankings by both sets of respondents stays fairly the same (coaching has gained in importance; negotiating and group process drop slightly), the percentage of respondents saying that these skills are important has increased.

Lastly, in comparing certain skills or issue perspectives that public relations managers need to have, the results of the two studies fall into these patterns:

OTHER REQUISITES FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGERS

(rank order percentages)

1988/89		1990	
Marketing	89.0	Strategic Planning	91.2
Strategic Planning	85.7	Ethical Issues	88.1
Ethics	75.9	Marketing	87.6
Social Responsibility	73.1	Social Responsibility	83.7
Technical Developments	58.8	Technical Developments	64.8
First Amend./ Legal Issues	37.1	First Amend./Legal	53.9
EEOP	33.0	EEOP	51.9
Labor Relations	27.3	Labor Relations	39.0

Of note here is the shift upward in 1990 of the importance of strategic planning, while in the 1988/89 study, marketing held first place in importance. Perhaps another sign of the times is the upward movement on the list of the importance of understanding ethical issues.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

From our review of the literature, from empirical data already gathered from the field, and from the opinions of practitioners and educators alike expressed in these surveys, there is strong evidence that the public relations curriculum of the future will, and must, include a strong management perspective.

This paper has presented only a first look at the data gathered in the 1990 national survey of practitioners and educators and certainly there is great opportunity ahead for additional analyses and comparisons, which the authors intend to pursue.

But because this paper has been prepared for an association of educators, the authors concentrated on the information that relates to how educators are preparing their students for management positions. We hope that this study gives educators guidance in moving their curricula beyond the traditional (and still important) skills-building courses in writing, editing and production to the management-level courses that will help future

practitioners face the complex organizational problems of the 21st century.

From this first report, we can conclude that educators seem to be doing an adequate job of preparing their students in the traditional areas of oral and written communications. It is evident that these skills, always important in the practice of public relations, will remain at the top of most practitioners' and educators' lists. If entry-level practitioners are even going to be considered for the managerial ladder, they must demonstrate high quality performance in oral and written communications skills.

Secondly, we might conclude that without lessening our emphasis on communications skills, we as educators must take a hard look at adding to our curricula. Are we doing all we can do, across the curriculum, to incorporate the skills identified as critical to success: problem-solving, planning and organizing, and goal-setting and prioritization?

Equally challenging is the need to find ways in the classroom, in internships, and in our PRSSA chapter programming, to instill young practitioners with the important people-management skills of delegation, supervision, and coaching. Lastly, we are fortunate (or perhaps unfortunate) that the daily newspapers and broadcast news shows are filled with real-life case studies we can (and should) incorporate into our classes that illustrate, for better or for worse, successes and failures

in the managerial skills of strategic planning, ethics, marketing, and social responsibility.

The authors contend that public relations educators cannot just hope that our students are gaining managerial perspectives across campus in the business school. The evidence is strong that if public relations is to grow in stature as a management function, it must perform managerially. While the authors chose not to include examples from the growing body of literature on "encroachment," the danger is clear and present that other professions (lawyers, accountants, even engineers) are assuming responsibility over the public relations function in many organizations. One might conclude that by taking greater control of the entrance standards of the profession, we will fulfill an educational mandate to prepare future practitioners to assume key positions and make important contributions to organizational success.

Through this study, the authors and their survey respondents have tried to identify the "ideal" in teaching public relations management. Now it is up to all of us as educators to move the "real" closer to that ideal.

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